

7A Am. Jur. 2d Automobiles § 16

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Automobiles and Highway Traffic

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I. In General

C. Regulation, in General

1. General Considerations

§ 16. Construction of laws regulating vehicles and use of highways

[Topic Summary](#) | [Correlation Table](#) | [References](#)

West's Key Number Digest

West's Key Number Digest, [Automobiles](#)  5(1), 5(5)

The general rules governing the interpretation and construction of statutes and ordinances generally are applicable to regulations governing vehicles and their use upon the public ways.¹ Every provision of a motor vehicle code should be interpreted in light of its intent to promote public safety.² It has been held that traffic regulations affecting safety should be liberally construed to effect their purpose.³ However, it has also been held that statutory authority to prescribe traffic rules is strictly construed,⁴ and that an ambiguity in a motor vehicle act should be read in favor of the motor vehicle operator because personal interests are at stake.⁵ Where the statute is clear on its face, no construction is warranted.⁶

The central principle which runs through the cases dealing with statutes regulatory of highway traffic is that such statutes must have a practical or workable interpretation, not an arbitrary or unreasonable construction, and never one that would require an impossibility.⁷ Where a court is confronted with a statute, the literal construction of which would render it unconstitutional, the court must adopt such a construction, when reasonably possible, as will save the statute, and at the same time save every savable provision or term in it.⁸

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Footnotes

- 1 [State v. Riley](#), 638 So. 2d 507 (Fla. 1994); [Delzer v. Penn](#), 534 N.W.2d 58 (S.D. 1995); [Ludwick v. Doe](#), 914 S.W.2d 522 (Tenn. Ct. App. 1995).

2 Com. v. DeFusco, 378 Pa. Super. 442, 549 A.2d 140 (1988).
3 State v. Bissonette, 445 N.W.2d 843 (Minn. Ct. App. 1989).
4 Save the Sunset Strip Coalition v. City of West Hollywood, 87 Cal. App. 4th 1172, 105 Cal. Rptr. 2d 172
(2d Dist. 2001); City of Hollywood v. Arem, 154 So. 3d 359 (Fla. 4th DCA 2014), review denied, 168 So.
3d 224 (Fla. 2015) and all writ jurisdiction dismissed, 171 So. 3d 114 (Fla. 2015).
5 State v. Jersey Carting, Inc., 259 N.J. Super. 130, 611 A.2d 677 (Law Div. 1992).
6 Missouri Highway and Transp. Com'n v. Mauer, 728 S.W.2d 722 (Mo. Ct. App. E.D. 1987).
7 Teche Lines, Inc., v. Danforth, 195 Miss. 226, 12 So. 2d 784 (1943).
8 Teche Lines, Inc., v. Danforth, 195 Miss. 226, 12 So. 2d 784 (1943).

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